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ABSTRACT

A handbook for instructors with the University Writing Program at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst is presented. The program is part of the university's English Department. A new six-credit university writing requirement consists of a three-credit freshman writing requirement and a three-credit junior year writing requirement, both of which are described. Information is provided on: placement in writing courses for entering freshmen; rules and regulations for teaching assistantships; the course syllabus and student requirements; principles for course planning; assigning and responding to student writing; peer response groups that give student writers an opportunity to share their writing; student writing revision; a conference-centered approach to the writing class; the final examination; grading; procedures for duplicating student writing; procedures for publishing student writing; class schedules; adds, drops, and withdrawals; submitting grades; evaluation of teaching assistants; the Writing Program Resource Center; tutoring services of the university; and academic and psychological testing services. Student rules and regulations are also presented concerning attendance and plagiarism. (SW)

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ED285504

The University Writing Program

# A Handbook for Instructors

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University of Massachusetts at Amherst



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## UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM

In 1982 the faculty of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst restructured its writing curriculum to incorporate the best contemporary theory and practice in the field of composition. The University Writing Program, the product of a diverse and experienced community of scholars and teachers, is committed to the belief that skill in writing is the hallmark of the educated person in any career or profession and is the collective and trans-disciplinary responsibility of the academic community.

The University Writing Program is part of the University's English Department. It operates under the supervision of the University Writing Committee, which is appointed by the Faculty Senate. The Program's primary function is to help students acquire the writing skills they will need in their academic work, their careers, and in their lives generally. The new six-credit University Writing Requirement is composed of a three-credit Freshman Writing Requirement and a three-credit Junior Year Writing Requirement. The freshman requirement is fulfilled by successful completion of English Writing Program 112, College Writing. The junior year requirement is fulfilled by completing the three-credit junior year writing program that is an integral part of the student's major.

### ENTERING FRESHMEN: PLACEMENT

All entering freshmen who have not been administratively exempted from the freshman writing requirement through SAT/Achievement or Advanced Placement scores must take the Writing Program Placement Test during summer counselling periods or during counselling weeks in the fall and spring semester.

On the basis of their performance on this test students are placed in Basic Writing (ENGLWP 111) or College Writing (ENGLWP 112), or are exempted from the freshman requirement. Exemption on the basis of performance on the Placement Test does not carry credit; therefore, students exempted through the Placement Test may choose to take College Writing for credit, or they may choose to add another course during the add-drop period. All freshmen who were exempted during the summer receive letters from the Program explaining their options.

Students who are placed in Basic Writing should know that for them this course is a prerequisite for College Writing. Basic Writing carries graduation credit, but it does not fulfill the Freshman Writing Requirement. All freshmen required to take Basic Writing will be placed in sections in their first semester so that they may take College Writing in their second semester and complete the requirement during their freshman year.

English Writing Program 111: Basic Writing

Three credits. Does not satisfy the Freshman Writing Requirement. A prerequisite to College Writing for those who are placed into Basic Writing through the Placement Test. Cannot be taken pass/fail.

This is a conference-centered course designed for students who have real difficulty in writing rapidly, fully, and accurately enough to survive in their academic work. In this course students write in class, under editorial supervision. The course meets for five class hours each week. Students work at their own pace through a sequence of assignments, using a writing process that emphasizes pre-writing and revision.

The instructor's class time is spent in short individual conferences with each student, enabling the instructor to gauge each student's progress and to direct comments to each student individually. Out-of-class writing includes journal-writing, weekly short essays, and specific exercises designed for the student's particular needs.

English Writing Program 112: College Writing

Three credits. Satisfies the Freshman Writing Requirement. Prerequisite: satisfactory performance on the Placement Test or completion of ENGLWP 111. Cannot be taken pass/fail.

Placement in ENGLWP 112 presupposes that the student possesses a greater capacity for successful independent writing than the student who is placed in ENGLWP 111. During the semester each student will complete at least six essays of 750-1,000 words. Each essay will be written and re-written, and when it is submitted in final form must be accompanied by all notes and drafts that were part of its composition. In addition to the major essays, instructors give frequent short writing assignments and assign regular journal-writing.

The instructor periodically suspends regularly scheduled classes and holds 30-minute conferences with each student. No instructor may replace more than three weeks' regular class meetings with conferences. In these conferences, students discuss with their teachers the writing that is in progress, the writing that has been completed, and the writing that is still in its early planning stages.

## Special Sections

### English as a Second Language (ESL)

The Writing Program offers sections of ENGLWP 112E that are specially designated for native speakers of other languages. These sections share the pedagogical goals and assumptions of the Writing Program courses, but are taught by instructors with experience in the teaching of English to speakers of other languages.

### English Writing Program 111C and 112C, with Word Processors

The Writing Program offers several sections of ENGLWP 111C and 112C in which students compose and revise on personal computers.

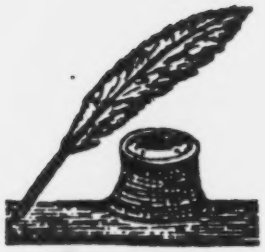
### Residential 112's

A number of ENGLWP 112 sections are located in the Orchard Hill, Southwest, Central and Northeast residential areas, and are available to students in those areas.

## THE JUNIOR YEAR WRITING REQUIREMENT

Students will fulfill the second half of the six-credit writing requirement by completing a writing course or program taken as a part of their major in the junior year. These courses emanate from and are defined by academic units--departments, schools, programs, or colleges. The administrative unit responsible for the JYWP is the University Writing Committee, appointed in the Spring of 1982 by the Faculty Senate.

## TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS: RULES, REGULATIONS



As a Teaching Assistant in the Writing Program you are expected to work 20 hours/week for the Program while the University is in session. This 20-hour workload includes teaching three three-credit courses each academic year, with the preparation that this entails; observing set office hours--at least two hours per week; attending course and program meetings and workshops; and participating in a course and teacher evaluation at the end of each semester. All Teaching Assistants in their first year with the Program are required to attend orientation sessions designed for the new teacher. They also participate in staff development activities sponsored by the Writing Program Resource Center.

Each Teaching Assistant is a member of an instructional team, led by a Course Director who is a member of the Writing Program staff and/or a member of the English Department. Course Directors all teach in the Program. The Course Director will schedule a team meeting each week for the first six weeks of the semester and every other week thereafter. During these meetings the team will work with copies of student papers, focusing on the diagnosis of student writing, setting appropriate goals and strategies for achieving these goals, and the evaluation of student writing. It is your obligation to attend these meetings. They serve the double purpose of maintaining consistency of principle and technique within the Program and of acquainting your colleagues and course director with your work, giving them the opportunity to learn from you and to help you when you need help.

## COURSE SYLLABUS AND POLICY STATEMENT

A copy of your syllabus must be kept on file at the Program office. This syllabus must include a statement of your expectations and of the penalties for missing scheduled classes and conferences (see "Attendance Policy," p. 8). The Moran syllabus, of which you have a copy, contains such statements, but perhaps embedded in more, or worse, prose than you would like. An adequate statement would run something like this: "Students in ENGLWP 112 are expected to spend each week at least ten hours working in the course, including class meetings, writing time, and conferences. Attendance is crucial. Students coming unprepared will be considered absent. Each student will be allowed to miss one week of classes to cover emergencies. Beyond that, a student will lose one full grade for each week or fraction of week beyond that point. On weeks when classes are suspended and replaced by conferences, missing a conference will be the equivalent of missing a full week of class."

## OFFICE HOURS

Each instructor will be assigned office space, generally in Bartlett or Goodell. You should establish your office hours and make them known to your students on the first day of class. The place and times should be printed on your course syllabus. We ask you to hold at least two regularly scheduled office hours each week, and to be available at other times by appointment. Office hour forms should be turned into the main office as soon as possible.

## CLASS SCHEDULES AND ROOMS

Under no circumstances may a teacher change the time when a class is scheduled to meet. Students at the University, especially freshmen, have trouble filling their schedules. Adding to their burden would be more than unkind: it is contrary to Writing Program policy. You should also teach the class in its assigned room. If you have problems with the classroom, please report these to Marcia Curtis in Bartlett 305E. Space is very tight throughout the campus, and changing into what may appear to be an open room will almost certainly cause conflicts later in the semester.

## ADDS, DROPS, AND WITHDRAWALS

Students must add and drop Writing Program courses through procedures established by the main office. Permission to enter a course/section must be obtained from the Program, not the instructor. Therefore, do not sign add/drop slips. Instead send students wishing to enter your course to the Writing Program registration table in the lobby of Bartlett Hall.

In order to withdraw from a course after registration has ended, students must receive permission from their dean. The students must show good reason, and, since a failing course grade does not constitute "good reason" for the deans, please do not suggest withdrawal to any student who has simply failed to meet your minimum course requirements or standards.

## REPORTING LOW GRADES AT MID-SEMESTER

You should inform students who are doing D or F work at mid-semester of their grades in the course at that point. The office will have forms on which you are to list the name of each of these students and the reasons for the low grade. Return completed forms to the Writing Program office.

## FINAL EXAMINATION WEEK

It is Program policy, and University policy, that the semester continue into examination week. There must be some clear and concluding activity that takes place during examination week. We suggest that a summary conference for each student, 20 minutes or so, for which the student has completed a writing exercise, be held in the examination period. Should you want to schedule a final examination, which we permit but do not encourage, you must register this intention with Marcia Curtis at the start of the semester. For suggestions on structuring the final conference, see the section title "Final Conference" in the larger unit titled "Course Activities."

## SUBMITTING GRADES: SEMESTER'S END

Each instructor is responsible for determining, in consultation with the Course Director, grades for his or her students and for filling out the necessary end-of-semester grade sheets. Before the end of the semester you will pick up your grade sheets at the Writing Program office and, having completed them, will return them to the office. We keep the rosters on file because students frequently have questions about their grades long after you have left the campus.

The University grading scale is A, A/B, B, B/C, C, C/D, D and F. No Writing Program course can be taken pass/fail.

An "I" (Incomplete) is appropriate for a student who has done most of the required work in the course but who, for a reason you judge adequate, has been unable to complete the work on schedule. Before you give an Incomplete grade, you should have an agreement with the student, in writing, that the particular assignments not now complete will be completed by a particular date. For each "I" given, the instructor is required to fill out an Incomplete Report Form detailing missing assignments. These forms must be submitted with the grade rosters to the Main Office.

For no-shows (students who have never attended the class), you should blacken the "Note" space on the grade sheet and write "no-show" in the "Note" section on the back of the sheet.

For students you know have withdrawn, blacken the "Note" space on the grade sheet and write "Dropped" in the "Note" section on the back of the sheet.

Students who disappeared at some point during the semester without formally withdrawing from the course should be failed. If they are eligible for withdrawal, they can later negotiate a retroactive "W" with their dean.

Students attending your class whose names do not appear on your grade sheet should be so informed. In order to get a grade on their transcripts they will have to add the course retroactively. Meanwhile, be sure to record their final grades, student numbers, and year of graduation on your grade sheet and class roster, so that the Program office will have the necessary records.

## EVALUATION

Your teaching performance will be evaluated by your Course Director and by the Program staff. Your Course Director will observe you at least once during the semester. Based upon this observation, a review of your teaching materials, student evaluations, and contacts with you in team meetings, the Course Director will submit to the Program Director an evaluation of your semester's work. In addition, your students will complete the Program's Teacher/Course Evaluation form. The results of the student evaluations will be available to you, to your Course Director, and to Program staff shortly after the semester's end.

One of the Program's functions is to help you improve your teaching. We have this obligation to you: to give you as much help as you need and want, subject to the limits of our teacher-training resources. We have an equally powerful obligation to the University's freshmen: to put the best possible teachers in our classrooms. We negotiate as best we can the difficult passage between these two obligations.

Retaining your Teaching Assistantship in the Writing Program depends both upon your performance as a teacher and upon your performance in your program of graduate study. Your academic performance is measured by your Graduate Program Director, who can declare you ineligible for an assistantship if you are not making satisfactory progress toward your degree. If you have any questions about your Graduate Program Director's judgment of your academic work, you should consult that person directly.

## PERSONNEL FILE

Your personnel file is kept in the Writing Program office. If you want to look at the file, you should submit a written request to Irene Torok. She will remove any materials clearly labelled "Confidential" and will make the file available to you within two working days.

## ABSENCES FROM TEACHING

Writing Program classes may not be cancelled except during conference weeks. If in the case of illness or emergency you know in advance that you will not be able to teach on a particular day, you must find a member of the Writing Program staff to replace you. In the event of an emergency that prevents you from teaching and does not allow you time to find a replacement, you must call the main office so that the staff can try to find a substitute or, in the worst case, tell your class that you will not be there.

For absences of a week or more you are responsible for finding and paying a substitute. The substitute must be a member of the Writing Program Staff. You should clear any such arrangement with your course director or with the main office.

## MAILBOXES

Mailboxes are located in the corridor outside the main office. Your mailbox is under your name. Please check your mailbox regularly for Program announcements or communications from your students. Please do not, for all the obvious reasons, use the mailboxes to return writing to your students.

## PAYCHECKS

Instructors are paid weekly and can pick up their checks after 11:30 Friday mornings in Bartlett 305.

## STUDENTS: RULES AND REGULATIONS

### ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students at the University of Massachussetts are expected to attend classes.

Because writing and editing take place in class, and because these activities, rather than a reading list or examinations, are at the center of all Writing Program courses, it is program policy that a student's absence from class, beyond a certain point, will result in the lowering of the final grade. Our policy is this: each student may miss a full week of classes. If the required work is submitted on time there should be no penalty. For the first hour of class missed beyond this week of grace, they lose a full grade; for the second hour a second grade; and so on. Conferences are crucial: if a student misses a conference, the student has missed a full week's work. You should make this policy clear to your students, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. In case of illness, students should explain their absences directly to the instructors. Instructors are expected to give students a reasonable opportunity to complete academic work which comes due when students are sick.

### PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

In both Basic Writing and College Writing, the Program maintains firm performance standards. We expect students in Writing Program courses to spend ten hours each week on coursework, including scheduled class meetings, assigned writing, and conferences.

### PLAGIARISM

Annette Rottenberg has prepared two hand-outs on plagiarism, one for instructors and one for students. These are available on the Resource Center shelves in Bartlett 303. They include definitions, examples, and suggestions for dealing with suspected cases, preventing plagiarism, and penalties. You should distribute and discuss copies of the student handout with your classes, thus fulfilling the faculty responsibility described in the following statement of university policy on academic honesty.

**Faculty Responsibilities**

"[the existence of] . . . a code of academic honesty does not relieve the individual teacher of the responsibility of explaining to students how he or she expects them to act. Teamwork may be necessary and desirable in some laboratory exercises but intolerable in others in the same course; this may be obvious to the teacher but not at all clear to the students. This illustrates why it is so important for each teacher to explain the ground rules of academic honesty to each class.

**Consultation** "A teacher encountering an apparent breach of these standards [of academic honesty] should arrange for a conference with this student as soon as possible. The teacher should never assign a failing grade in such a case until after such a conference. The student may be able to give a satisfactory explanation or a misunderstanding may be resolved as a result of these conferences: in this case the matter rests between the student and the teacher.

**Report** "If, after thorough consultation with the student, the evidence shows that a failing grade for work improperly done or a penalty for a violation of academic honesty or both are appropriate, the teacher should send a report to the ESCAH* which describes the incident and the penalty. The teacher should also inform the student that the report is being filed and the recommended penalty.

**Penalty** "The teacher can determine the grade, but can only recommend a punishment of disciplinary probation or a more severe one. In preparing a report, the teacher should keep these points in mind:

(1) Ths student has the right of appeal before any penalty can be imposed even though the penalty involves only a lowered grade and even though no report is submitted before the appeal.

(2) If there is an appeal, it will first come before the Committee on Academic Honesty, and the Committee will be primarily interested in the evidence of dishonesty. Significant facts are more easily put together at the time of the incident than weeks later when a hearing is scheduled.

"During the course of events prior to a hearing, the ESCAH should attempt to negotiate a settlement which eliminates the need for a hearing."

*Executive Secretary Committee on Academic Honesty, C/O Office of the Coordinating Dean, South College.

**Academic Appeal**

Students have the right to be heard in appeal on any academic matter. The appeal begins with the instructor, and then moves to the Writing Program's Grievance Officer, Annette Rottenberg. Should the grievance not be resolved at this level, it proceeds to the Writing Program Director, to the Chair of the English Department, and then to the University's Ombudsperson.

## PLANNING YOUR COURSE:
## THE PRINCIPLES

### ASSUMPTIONS

ENGLWP 111 and ENGLWP 112 are based on the same assumptions: that writing is primarily an activity and not a subject; that one learns to write by writing and receiving feedback; that writers need to become aware of their own writing process; and that the primary text of a writing course should be the students' own writing. In both courses students are required to purchase The Little English Handbook, by E.J. Corbett, as a reference work.

We assume an activity--such as writing--is best taught through engagement in that activity. The writing teacher is in the position of coach or experienced writer working with less experienced writers. There are programs that are founded on other assumptions: that one learns to write by studying grammar, or by reading prose models, or by listening to someone talk about what good writing really is. Because measurement is difficult in the field of composition, there is very little solid ground for claiming the superiority of one method over another. So far, however, no advocate of an indirect method has been able to show that it "works." In the absence of such proof, we follow common sense. As James Moffet has written, "Since the natural assumption should be that one learns to write by writing, the burden of proof is upon those who advocate an indirect method." One learns to swim primarily by swimming, with some coaching--not by studying hydrodynamics, or by watching great swimmers on TV. If you want to learn to paint, you take a studio course, not an art history course. Writing is, primarily, an activity, and activity is learned in performance.

We base what we do not only upon our knowledge of theory and practice in our field, but upon what we know of our students' needs. The National Assessment of Writing, completed in 1976, found that Massachusetts high school students did well on tests that measured their ability to name parts of speech, but did poorly on tests that measured their ability to write. The Assessment found that Massachusetts high school students needed a great deal of writing practice. The Assessment also found that almost half of the seventeen-year-old students in Massachusetts high schools, given a chance to revise their work, made it worse. This suggests that our students' revising and editing processes need attention.

Because our courses focus on the activity of writing, you may need to adopt a teaching style that is somewhat different from the styles you have observed or practiced. The activity is at the center; the teacher is not. The teacher's function is to keep the activity going, to keep the students writing and editing

and re-writing. This is not easy. The temptation to bring in some lovely poetry and analyze it will be almost overpowering at times. But this temptation must be resisted. From our perspective, when the class is busily at work writing and/or editing, things are going well.

Almost certainly, the best preparation for a writing class is to do yourself the writing that you have assigned your students. When you have faced what the students face, you can coach them easily and successfully. A given assignment has its own particular problems that you will, when you do it, solve in your own way. When you read your students' writing from this perspective, you will see them solving the same problems. You will be able to suggest alternative solutions, structures, approaches. Having written yourself, you are the expert, the coach. The danger we all face: losing touch, ourselves, with the activity that we are teaching.

## "THE CURRICULUM"

Given the Program's assumption that writing is most usefully considered an activity, course planning becomes a matter of creating a schedule of activities, as in studio art or track. On given days, work will be due in particular stages; critiques will be held; exercises will be completed. The word "curriculum" fits a course like "American History, 1865-1914" rather nicely--one runs through the subject, from beginning to end. The "curriculum" in a course like ours, however, will look more like the curriculum in a studio art course, or in one of the Music Department's performance courses.

Your students will move from project #1 to project #2 to project #3 and beyond, learning as they go. At the end of the semester, they will have completed a number of projects. They will not have covered a subject. They will, through your attention to their efforts, have become better practitioners of the craft of writing. That will be the product of their work with you--not the acquisition of a body of factual knowledge. Through The Little English Handbook, you will have made accessible to them ready reference to the conventions of Edited American English. You will not have "taught" these conventions; you will have insisted that your student writers follow these conventions.

In planning your course, you will want to address both the predictable needs of relatively inexperienced writers and the individual and idiosyncratic needs of each writer. Here are some objectives that might apply to your course generally: you hope that your students will learn to think an issue through in depth; to formulate an interesting "point" and develop it thoroughly; to create contexts and structures appropriate to particular audiences; to be able to move appropriately among levels of abstraction; to become better readers of each other's work; to become better readers of their own work; to become able to make large-scale changes in their drafts; to become better able to write different kinds of expository writing; to develop a range of voice and imagined audience. The writing will be almost exclusively expository. It is understood that expository writing is a creative exercise. It is further understood that occasional writing in other genres may be helpful in reaching the course objectives.

## ASSIGNING AND RESPONDING TO STUDENT WRITING

Some teachers allow students to choose their own topics; others assign topics; most of us move between the extremes. An assigned topic often lends itself more easily to class interaction; the open topic allows the students to discover a center of interest. We find in many of our sections that initially students appreciate open topics, but as the semester progresses they more and more appreciate outside suggestion. The teacher's agenda in assigning a topic may be instruction in a mode of thought characteristic of the academy (defining, classifying, examining assumptions, establishing criteria) or practice in a particular rhetorical form.

Our experience tells us that the student writers in your section will be a various lot. Some will be blocked, others will be glib. Some will be so concerned about the "rules" that they will not be able to write fluently; others may pour on the prose to the point of self-indulgence. Most will have, somewhere in their minds, a formula for "good writing" that will not ultimately be helpful to them. It is our job to make our student writers better, collectively and individually. Here are some possible goals that you might establish for individual students:

Student A depends instinctively upon a deductive, top-down structure; should learn to use other structures.

Student B habitually writes dull, spare, perfunctory introductions; seems to have an "introductory paragraph" formula embedded somewhere; needs to learn how to imagine, and then establish for the reader, an appropriate context for the essay.

Student C tries to sound educated by using--incorrectly, more often than not--an elevated diction; needs to work on establishing other voices.

Student D writes almost no complicated sentences; has, perhaps, learned to avoid them because of the greater potential for error; needs to be encouraged to attempt more complicated structures.

Student E is a competent but "safe" writer; needs help taking risks, particularly during early drafts.

Student F rarely uses transitions; needs to become aware of readers' need for same.

Student G is reluctant to focus on an idea and pursue it; essays are characterized by short, undeveloped sub-sections or a series of false starts; needs to learn to do extensive pre-writing and to make appropriate choices during early drafts.

Student H does not write conclusions--essays just stop; needs to appreciate audience's need for closure.

Student I is extremely teacher-dependent; will not revise without getting specific, unequivocal instructions from you; needs to internalize teacher and/or, paradoxically, to gain confidence in own sense of right.

Student J writes essays that are rehearsals of pat stances--i.e. the pro forma essay for or against abortion, toxic wastes, nuclear or solar power; needs to learn how to make a topic his/her own.

In all of the above, we have been excessively but unavoidably general. There are more "kinds" of student writers than there are letters in any alphabet. We mean to suggest potential areas of concern, not to establish categories of students. It will clearly be most efficient to deal with your students' individual problems in conference or through feedback on their writing. The impulse to impose upon the entire class what only two or three class members need is a powerful one, and should be resisted. Its equal and opposite: the impulse to give generally applicable advice to a single student in a conference.

It is also necessary to set priorities in working with student writers. A given student will have not one difficulty, as we may have suggested above, but ten or fifteen. You will need to decide what to work on. You won't be able to do everything in a semester, or a year, or a four-year curriculum. You will have to decide which is the most urgent problem, which the next most urgent, and so on. You will almost certainly join us in the search for our profession's Philosopher's Stone: that single bit of advice, that single exercise or assignment, that will produce not improvement but transformation. There are breakthroughs, but not often. Improvement is our goal, and it is sufficient.

## PEER RESPONSE GROUPS

Peer response groups give student writers an opportunity to share their writing, providing them with readers other than the teacher. Composing is a solitary, individual process; sharing writing is a social, group process. Response groups or pairs can work on particular aspects of later drafts--voice, structure, organization patterns--but most often their purpose is to act as sounding boards for first drafts. Students read their drafts aloud to each other and answer questions supplied by the teacher and/or the writer. The writer uses the comments to revise the draft. The following is a list of suggestions for using peer reponse groups in English Writing Program 112.

Classroom atmosphere. If you are going to use peer response in your class, you will need to create a classroom atmosphere in which students feel comfortable reading their work aloud to each other. Some suggestions: let them introduce themselves to each other in the first or second class meeting. Have them read their early in-class writing aloud to the group without comment. In your discussions of their writing and in your written comments, model the kind of feedback you want them to give each other: positive, descriptive, and specific. Prod them in discussion to develop their responses, asking them to analyze why something works or doesn't work for them. Encourage them to suggest alternative solutions to writing problems. Create permanent response groups early in the semester. After the first few assignments, let students choose a partner they want to work with for the semester; then put pairs together in groups of four.

Peer Response Sheets. In order to keep peer response groups on task most of us use response sheets with questions for the readers to answer in writing. The writer attaches the sheets to the notes and drafts handed in to the teacher. The questions change for each assignment. An excellent source for questions is Elbow's Writing with Power, pp. 240-263. He categorizes two types of questions: "criterion-based," evaluative questions ("What is the quality of the content?" "How well is the writing organized?" "How effective is the language?") and "reader-based questions," which ask how the writing affects the reader ("Point to the sentences or passages you liked especially." "What do you expect? What do you need next?") [We prefer reader-based questions, especially in the early sheets, because they are descriptive. Evaluation is the teacher's function, and the teacher's evaluation will be the one that prevails.]

Note: Although the response sheets are necessary to give you an idea of what's going on in the groups, the discussion of writing they stimulate is the most important outcome. Don't make the response sheets so complicated that filling them out becomes the major focus of the group. Also the most meaningful questions, from the authors' point of view, will be their own. You may encourage the authors to write their own questions on the sheet.

Monitor, reinforce, and evaluate group response process. Circulate among the groups as they work, intervening when necessary to get them started or keep them on track. Look over their response sheets and reinforce comments in your written response to the writer. Usually the groups review first drafts and the writers use their suggestions to prepare the mid-process. That way you can refer to the comments as you respond to the mid-process, and your comments won't "compete" with the peer response. At some point, perhaps in conferences, ask the students to evaluate their groups, so you can get some sense of how well they are working.

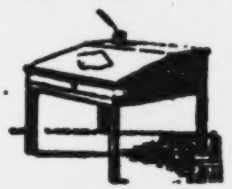
## REVISING

As we noted earlier, Massachusetts 17-year-olds, given a chance to revise their writing, made it worse almost as often as they made it better. So the handbook advice, "Revise,revise," is based upon an assumption that does not hold: revision does not necessarily result in improvement. Apprentice writers do not revise well. They revise poorly because they do not know how to revise--which is to say they carry in their mind's eye an inappropriate model of "good writing." They bring their own writing closer to this inappropriate model and, in the process, make the writing worse.

Much of our work as writing teachers has as its actual goal the re-calibration of the students' sense of "good writing." The "good" toward which the reviser aspires is relative, not absolute, however. This is almost certainly the most difficult lesson that our students will have to learn. A good piece of literary criticism doth not a good lab report make. Considerations of context--genre, situation--determine the particular and appropriate "good." A structure that works for one subject almost certainly will not work for a second. We might consider substituting "appropriate" for "good" in almost every case. The conventions of Edited American English are to be followed. That is a given. But beyond these conventions there is only choice, and choice may be appropriate or inappropriate.

## CONFERENCES

Many of us believe, perhaps even most of us, that the one-to-one writing conference is a powerful teaching situation. The great virtue of that conference is that you can talk directly with one writer about that particular writer's writing. If a writer is blocked, you can suggest strategies that will circumvent the block. If the writer is excessively verbose, you can be the ruthless editor, whacking away at the weeds and brush. If the writer is apparently unable to engage directly with a topic, you can suggest ways of discovering deep connections. If the writer can't discover topics, you can suggest ways of discovering fruitful topics. If the writer has a spelling problem, you can precisely define the problem and show the writer how to deal with it. The one-to-one conference enables you to act upon a precise diagnosis. Student 1 has problem X; deal with that. Student 2 has entirely different problem M; deal with that. When we work with a single writer, we can diagnose that particular writer's difficulty and accurately prescribe treatment.



The difficulty with the conference-centered approach is that a writing class is useful. There are things that you can do with 20 writers that you cannot do with one. Peer-editing, group brainstorming, developing a topic through discussion, publishing student writing--the list is long. Freshman classes serve an important social function, one that should not be considered primary but that has certain institutional importance. The freshmen are new arrivals at a huge university; their writing course is probably the only small course they have. In your writing class they will improve their writing skills; that is the first, and only, agenda item. In the process of improving their writing skills, however, they may also find in the writing class the group support they need to sustain them in an otherwise large and impersonal institution.

So it is that we suggest that you suspend some classes and replace them with conferences. We ask you not to replace all, or even most, of your classes with conferences. If past experience is a guide, your students will press you for more conferences. They like them--most for good reasons, some for bad. To support you and help you do the right thing, we have established a Program policy: in our freshman courses you may replace up to three weeks of classes with scheduled conferences.

We have regular staff workshops on conference-giving, so we will not go on at length here. We warn you of the deepest pitfall: using conference time to give mini-lectures that would more efficiently be given to the entire class. Just past this first pitfall is a second: spending too much conference-time talking, and too little listening.

For good reading on conference techniques, we refer you to David Frail's essay, "Conference Techniques," and Donald Murray's article, "The Listening Eye." If you want to go further, the resource library has copies of Alfred Benjamin's The Helping Interview, a book that is filled with counselling vocabulary but is, despite its language, most useful.

## FINAL CONFERENCE/EXAMINATION

A word from the Director: "I feel that a final examination is not the appropriate way to conclude a semester such as the one my ENGLWP 112 students have completed. A final conference suits me, and I think the course, better. I have assembled the following procedure from bits and pieces gleaned from a number of you over the past few years. Three classes before the end of the semester, I bring in the students' folders and a sheet on which I ask them to answer two general questions: 'In essay #1, what changes did you make as you progressed from first draft to finished essay?' and 'What did you discover about your writing, or about writing in general, in working through this essay?' It has taken my classes two 50-minute periods to complete this work on their seven essays. I expect them to read through all their drafts as they do this, and write substantial answers to the questions. Then on the last class I send them home with the summary sheets that they have completed.

"These summary sheets form the basis for an assignment they will complete and bring to the final conference: a one-page essay in which they describe their progress (what they learned about writing) during the semester. This essay accomplishes two purposes: it causes the student writers to look back and review the work of the semester, and it provides me with a solid basis for a summary of their progress and an outline of what they need to do in the next few years if they want to continue this improvement. During the conference--and this is my own evasive strategy--I give the students a solid indication of what their grade will be. I may give them the grade directly, if I am sure of the grade; I may give them a range or a floor, if I am less sure. But everyone leaves with a grade, or with an estimate that is not more than a half-grade-point off, one way or the other. At the end of the conference, I return their folders to them, except in the occasional case where I feel that my final grade may become the subject of dispute and/or litigation."

## EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE: GRADING

The Writing Program is chiefly concerned with improving the level of its students' writing skills. As teachers, we find ourselves most frequently in the role of editor, helping the student writers move on to higher levels of proficiency. We are, to a lesser but still important extent, evaluators of the students' writing performance. The two roles--helper and evaluator, may seem, may indeed be, in conflict.

Your Director gets himself out of the apparent difficulty by thinking of himself as a track coach. The track coach works with the class during practice hours and advises them on technique and training. As the result of their work together, the performance of the group rises significantly. At the end of the season, let us imagine that one somewhat round student has improved his time in the 100-yard dash from 23 seconds to 18 seconds. The track coach will say something like this: "You have worked hard, improved significantly, and I am pleased and proud. What is more important, you should be pleased and proud, because the improvement is the result of your work. You began this semester a very slow runner. During the semester you have developed speed and stamina, and you have improved in absolute terms more than anyone in the class. I would be unkind to suggest to you now that you are a world-class sprinter. You are not. You run the 100-yard dash in 18 seconds. That is faster, but not particularly fast, relative to your age group. You can continue improving if you adopt the

training program I have sketched out for you. In two or three years, if you work steadily at this program, you might find yourself running the 100-yard dash in twelve seconds, and perhaps a little better."

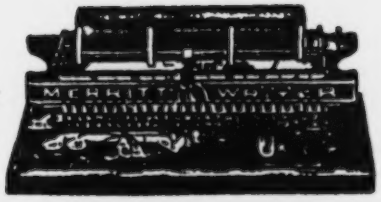
Now writing is unlike running in this: the writer's performance cannot be measured by a machine. But evaluation is still entirely possible. There is a widely-shared sense of what is good academic writing and what is not. If a student's writing is, at the end of the semester, not good, this lack of quality should in some way be reflected in the grade. We are, for better or worse, in an institution that gives grades, adds them up, develops grade-point averages, and creates a transcript, largely numerical, that in students' minds often seems to be of staggering importance to future career, earning power, and happiness generally. If the student places high value on grades, and you give this student an 'A' for low quality work, this may send an inappropriately positive signal to the writer. We can imagine in a year or so down the line, this interior monologue: "I just flunked my second History paper. I received an A in College Writing. What's going on? It's not fair."

We do not advocate placing emphasis upon grades. How you handle grading in your own section is, however, your business. In some of our sections, we tell students that the basis of their grade is the quality and quantity of written work in their portfolio. We tell them that we will comment on their work, but will not grade individual essays. We tell them further that anytime during the semester they can, during office hours, ask us to evaluate their portfolios. We will do so, and will tell them what their grade is at this particular point in the semester. We find this really quite easy to do. In the first place, few students ask for a grade. When they do, grading can become a gentle incentive for improvement. The comment "You are doing high 'C' work" generally elicits the response, "What should I work on to improve the grade?" At this point, you should speak carefully, and make a note of what you have said. If the student does improve in the suggested direction, you will have to keep your end of the implied contract.

Just a note to add perspective: the University undergraduate grade average is 2.5 or B/C. Most of your freshmen will be used to A's and B's from their high-school careers; you, from your work as a graduate student, will be used to A's and B's. However rude the shock for all parties involved, you and your freshmen will have to understand: A is an extraordinary grade, B signifies honors-level work, and B/C signifies University-average work.

The Resource Center Library has copies of an essay by Mary Beaven titled "Individualized Goal-Setting, Self-Evaluation, and Peer-Evaluation" (from Cooper and Odell, Evaluating Writing) that covers some interesting ground. There is also a most useful section in C.K. Smith's Styles and Structures, "Discovering Criteria," that bears directly on the foundations of judgment: the criteria upon which the judgment is based. On pages 308 and 309, Smith suggests a range of criteria that one might use in the evaluation of written work.

## PUTTING YOUR PLANS INTO ACTION:
## DUPLICATING AND PUBLISHING STUDENT WRITING



### USING STUDENT WRITING AS TEXT:
### PROCEDURES FOR DUPLICATION

Because most of the written materials in your course will be generated by you and your students, you need to be aware of the various means of duplication available. There are three: the ditto machine and the large copy machine in in Bartlett 308C, and the university copy centers in Herter, South College and Whitmore.

Ditto Machine--308C Bartlett

For assignments, short examples or other materials to be used in class, you will probably use the ditto machine. Ditto masters, which you prepare yourself, are available on the shelf in the Main Office. Irene Torok or Wendy Matys will show you how to use the machine in 308C. The advantage of ditto is that you control the whole process yourself and can run off your own materials fifteen minutes before class, if need be.

Copy Machine--308C Bartlett

If you want to use a single student essay or get three or four copies of several essays for peer editing, or if you want to use an editorial from some newspaper or magazine, consider the copy machine in the Bartlett 308C. To prevent machine burnout and other problems, we establish this limit on the use of the machine: you may make two copies per week for every student in your ENGLWP 112 class(es). So: if you have 20 students you may copy 40 sheets a week. If you use the machine's reduction feature you can get two pages on a sheet, which will effectively double the amount you can copy with same number of sheets.

The machine is located in Bartlett 308C. It is available from 8:00-12:00 and 1:00-4:30. To use it, you do these things:

1) get the cartridge from Irene or Wendy;

2) do your copying, and record the number of copies you have made on the log sheet;

3) return the cartridge.

The Writing Program staff is prepared to handle the cartridge, add paper and supplies to the machine as necessary, and give you a lesson on the use of the machine. The staff is not prepared to do the copying for you, or to collate and staple.

## PUBLISHING STUDENT WRITING: PROCEDURES FOR PUBLICATION

Publication creates its own pressure for excellence. As long as student writers are writing for teachers only, they will feel pressure only from that audience. If they write for their peers as well, and if their paragraphs and sentences are actually published, they will feel greater pressure to produce good writing. In addition, their "magazines" can be the text that supports various activities: discussing voice,and audience, describing structure, illuminating criteria, developing heuristics.

### University Copy Centers

Your students have paid a lab fee. This lab fee is to make it possible for you to bring their work into class as the primary text, so you may, must, use this fund for the reproduction of student writing. We suggest regular publication of class "magazines": on the average, four booklets a semester. Publication should be early in the semester, if it is to achieve its purpose. Publishing the last essay of the semester is not permitted.

The lab fee should not be used for syllabi or material that can be run off on the Program's ditto machine. It's in lieu of a textbook purchase. Its purpose: to enable you to bring student writing into class as the text.

The following description is a step-by-step breakdown of Charlie Moran's system for student publication:

1) Tell the students that they should aim at three pages of finished prose for their first essay. No cover sheets, please, but name and title on the first page and last name in upper left corner of each subsequent page.

2) Prepare a cover sheet for the publication. There are copies of a variety of designs in the ditto machine room; all you have to do is type on your section number and the date (and a title, if you want one).

3) On the day the students' finished essays come in, take everything and write page numbers in dark ink, top and center of page, and count the pages, making sure to include in the count the cover sheet. Between the cover and first page, insert a blank slip sheet to prevent copying on the back of the cover sheet. **Then bring the page count to the Writing Program main office for a copy slip.** Take the publication and copy slip to one of the copy centers--Herter, South College or Whitmore. Make sure the copy person knows that this is to be back-to-back, not reduced. **DO NOT ALTER THE COPY SLIP ONCE YOU HAVE LEFT THE WRITING PROGRAM OFFICE. IF YOU DISCOVER A MISTAKE, RETURN TO THE OFFICE FOR A NEW SLIP.** These slips provide the Program's only record of expenditures, and falsified records jeopardize the Program. Also, do not try to secure copy slips in any manner other than the one described here.

If all goes well, the students' publication is ready in 24 hours from the time you deliver it to the copy center. Pick it up and bring it to the duplicating machine room and staple it with the heavy-duty manual stapler. Put two staples through the left-hand margin. The booklets are ready to pass out in class to be used then and there for a class exercise or for an assignment at a later date. A typical Moran assignment: "Read through the essays and decide which are the three best. Write a short paragraph in which you describe the criteria you have used in making this decision."

The University Copy Centers guarantee a 24 hour, one-working-day turnaround time. For the student publications it is wise to allow them two full working days. It is most important to get the student essay to the copy center immediately after class, if everything is to go smoothly.

## PROGRAM RESOURCES

### WRITING PROGRAM RESOURCE CENTER

The Center, directed by Sara Stelzner, includes the Writing Program Library, teaching materials, the staff-created Resource File, and a staff of experienced instructors ready and eager to listen to teaching experiences, good and bad. The Center is located in Bartlett 303.

Resource Center staff members teach two courses during the year and are expected to set aside four hours each week for their Center-related responsibilities. They assist Sara Stelzner in the planning and conduct of Resource Center Workshops, they video-tape and counsel new teaching assistants, and they review and revise the Center's materials and programs.

The Resource Center has established a "Mentor" system through which new teachers are paired with experienced teachers. Teaching Assistants new to the Program will meet their mentors at the first orientation session.

### OMBUDSPERSON

Annette Rottenberg handles any problems that may arise between students and their instructors, including apparent problems in the students' placement in either ENGLWP 111 or ENGLWP 112. If you have any question about a particular student's placement, please do not speak to that student directly. Instead, speak with either Annette Rottenberg or Marcia Curtis.

## UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

TUTORING SERVICES: The University houses a number of tutoring agencies should any of your students require extra assistance.

Residential Writing Centers--Writing Centers in various residential halls provide peer-tutoring to residents on a drop-in basis. For Southwest residents, the Writing Center is located in Pierpont Dormitory; for Sylvan residents, in Cashin; for Central residents, in Baker. These Writing Centers were not designed to teach grammar or provide other remedial help. Instead, trained student-tutors help fellow students think up topics, focus their materials, and create workable structures in which to express ideas by providing encouragement and occasional challenge.

Writing Program Tutoring--when funds are available, Writing Program instructors, under the direction of Annette Rottenberg, provide some tutoring services. Inquiries should be made to the Writing Program office, 305 Bartlett Hall.

Bilingual Collegiate Program (BCP)--Located in Wilder Hall, BCP offers tutoring to bilingual students in a number of subject areas, including written English.

Collegiate Committee for the Education of Black and Minority Students (CCEBMS)--Located in New Africa House, CCEBMS also offers tutoring services to minority students.

Handicap Affairs--Handicap Affairs, in Whitmore, provides interpreters and readers for hearing-impaired and visually-impaired students.

Physical Education--The athletic department, under the direction of Al Barber, 41 Boyden, provdides tutoring, advising and counseling for UMass athletes.

ACADEMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING SERVICES

The Center for Counseling and Academic Development, located in 123 Berkshire House, telephone 5-0333, offers a wide range of clinical and skills-related services: psychological testing and counseling; learning skills assessment and development; special services for learning disabled and dyslexic students.

If you believe one of your students might require assistance beyond that provided by a tutoring agency, you may consult with Marcia Curtis in the Writing Program office or, if you choose, refer the student directly to The Center for Counseling and Academic Development.

## A SELECTED TEACHER'S BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following titles have been selected for their practical value to the writing teacher. All are available through the resource center library.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Our thanks to Elisabeth Sandberg for her permission to use entries from her Three-Area bibliography, "Teaching College Freshman Writing."

## PROGRAM STAFF

**Bob Cartledge**, Computer Lab Technician. Bartlett 101; 545-0610.

**Marcia Curtis**, Assistant Director: Administration. Bartlett 305E; 545-3667. Student placement questions; teaching assignments; office assignments; course scheduling; special projects.

**Anne Herrington**, Associate Director, Acting Director (Spring 1987). Bartlett 385, 545-4620.

**Wendy Matys**, Office Assistant, Bartlett 305; 545-0610. Change of grade; exemption/placement records; incompletes (records and changes); grade sheets, rosters, and "F" forms at the end of the semester; keys (office); notification of absences from teaching; xerox slips; appointments with Annette Rottenberg, Charles Moran.

**Charles Moran**, Director. Bartlett 305C; 545-0610.

**William Mullin**, Associate Director for the Junior Year Writing Program. Bartlett 303B; 545-0610 or 545-1944.

**Annette Rottenberg**, Assistant Director: Grievances. Bartlett 305B; 545-1952. Placement questions and complaints; exemption procedures and tests; academic grievances.

**Sara Stelzner**, Assistant Director: Writing Program Resource Center. Resource Center Staff: Carol Batker, Deborah Kelm, Isabella Matsikidze, Paul Puccio. Bartlett 303C; 545-1952. Teacher-training workshops; videotaping; library.

**Irene Torok**, Office Manager. Bartlett 303D; 545-0610. Bookkeeper, TA contracts, personnel files, payroll, ditto machine maintenance, xerox slips, appointments with Charles Moran.

## Course Directors, 1987-1988

Basic Writing. . . . . Marcia Curtis, Sara Stelzner

College Writing. . . . Joseph Bartolomeo, George Carey, Peter Elbow, Roberta French, Anne Herrington, Robert Keefe, Radha Radhakrishnan, Annette Rottenberg